## OF SECRET DATA ON TONKIN ATTACK

He Says Intelligence Source Confirmed Navy Reports -Radio Monitor Hinted

Excerpts from the McNamara statement are on Page 12.

By JOHN W. FINNEY Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 20 Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara disclosed today that the Administration had "highly classified and unimpeachable" intelligence information establishing that two American destroyers had come under North Vietnamese attack in the Gulf of Tonkin in August, 1964.

He made the disclosure in a statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as it began a politically sensitive reexamination of the crucial Tonkin incidents.

In reprisal for the incidents -an Aug. 2 attack on the destroyer Maddox and an Aug. 4 attack on the destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy-the Administration ordered the first air strikes against North Vietnam and got Congressional approval of a resolution endorsing "all necessary measures" to "prevent further aggression."

Fulbright Advice Ignored

The statement was handed out by the Pentagon press office after a closed session at which Senator J. W. Fulbright, the committee chairman, had advised Mr. McNamara against making the statement public immediately.

Mr. Fulbright, though obviously annoyed, declined to make an immediate rebuttal statement.

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Tonkin incidents three and a then or now that an attack had infe

Tonkin incidents three and a half years later, is questioning the whole decision-making procedure followed by the Administration in reacting to the reported attacks by North Vietnamese PT boats.

It is generally accepted by the committee that the daylight attack on Aug. 2 occurred. But questions are being raised by the committee as to whether the nighttime engagement on Aug. 4 occurred, and more important, whether the Administration had conclusive proof of the attack before ordering reprisals.

a suspicion among some committee members that the Administration interpreted inconclusive and circumstantial evilight of a predisposition within two boats in the engagement.

the Executive branch to carry Mr. McNamara never identithe war to North Vietnam.

In concluding his statement,

Mr. McNamara emphatically denied that the United States had somehow provoked the Aug. 4 incident or used it as a pretext for attacking North Vietnam.

He characterized any such insinuations as "monstrous."

Mr. McNamara acknowledged that "some uncertainty" isted then and exists to this day about "some of the precise details" of the second attack. But, he said, "there should be no uncertainty about the fact that an attack took place."

At the time the decision was made to order retaliatory air strikes against Vietnam, he said, "sufficient evidence was in the hands of the President to establish beyond any doubt

taken place."

In reaching this decision, it was apparent from the Mc-Namara statement that the Administration placed considerable reliance on secret intelligence information obtained by monitoring North Vietnamese radio command circuits.

Shortly before the Aug. 4 engagement, he said, "an intelligence report of a highly classified and unimpeachable nature" was received stating that North Vietnamese naval forces intended to attack the Maddox

and Turner Joy.

Then during the attack, he continued, another intelligence Underlying these questions is the North Vietnamese patrol suspicion among some com- craft had reported they were report was received stating that involved in the engagement.

And finally, he said, there was another intelligence report dence of the Aug. 4 attack in ese forces had reported losing stating that the North Vietnam-

the tensions between the committee and the Executive branch over the Tonkin incidents. But perhaps even more exacerbating to the committee was the manner in which the Administration chose to make the McNamara statement public -in defiance of the longstanding protocol that witnesses' statements should be re-

information public and to make

such prominent use of it in de-

fense of the Administration's

case seemed likely to add to

of the Congressional committee. While it succeeded in striking the first blow, the Administration may also have contributed to the prolongation of the investigation. By the end of the day, some angered committee members were suggesting that Mr. McNamara should be recalled and other witnesses summoned.

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fied the source of the intelligence reports except to say they came from "a highly classified and unimpeachable source," But Pentagon sources indicated that the intelligence information had been obtained by monitoring radio communications between the North Vietnamese patrol boats and their commands ashore.

Until the McNamara statement today, the Defense Department has repeatedly declined to discuss whether it had electronic intelligence information confirming the north vietnamese attacks on the ground that such information was secret.

It was also understood that the Defense Department had declined to make such information available to the committee staff in its study of the Tonkin incidents.

The fact that Mr. McNamara has now chosen to make the